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The Wasteful War

A June 8 Central Intelligence Agency report that wouldn't be public yet if it weren't for the inquisitiveness of a Chicago newspaper proposes that "some kind of negotiated settlement" be worked out in Viet Nam.

And why not?

In the report, Willard Matthias, a senior member of the CIA's Board of National Estimates, says quite frankly what many people must have suspected all along—that he has serious doubts a real victory is even possible.

The principal objection to negotiated settlement, apparently, is that it be mistaken for capitulation on the part of the United States and South Viet Nam. This is the impression Senator Goldwater seeks to leave, but it might better be described as a humanitarian recognition of fact.

Humanitarian, that is, in that lives are being lost, hamlets devastated and homes split asunder in what our own intelligence

tells us may well be a hopeless cause.

The other objection to negotiation is that General Charles de Gaulle thought of it first, and the mood nowadays is to reject whatever the French president says. We forget, that as far as Viet Nam goes, his is the voice of experience; the French learned about Indochina (now called Viet Nam) the hard way.

Qualified sources say that though negotiation of a settlement is not officially acceptable in Washington, the proposal has widespread backing among those in position to judge the situation authoritatively.

It is unrealistic to expect anything will be done along these lines before the November election, but we hope it will be given earnest consideration thereafter.

If we're to make such a move, it will come more easily now, before Red China is openly involved.